

THE BELLOWS

29th GREAT YEAR

November 15, 2007

Puget Sound Photographic Collector's Society, Inc.

Vol. XXIV No. 3

WHAT	NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF PSPCS
WHERE	DES MOINES MASONIC TEMPLE 2208 S. 223rd St. (Take Midway exit #149 west off I-5...go to first stop light west of Pacific Hwy. South...Turn right.)
WHEN	Thursday, November 15th 7:00 p.m. till 10:00 p.m. (doors open about 6:00 p.m.)
WHY	A short business meeting..Auction (one item lot per member please)..Door Prize..Show & Tell..Members' trade and sell tables (free to members, please cover during business meeting.) <u>Program:</u> There are two topics: 1. Bring a photographic item you can't quite figure out and see if your fellow members can. 2. Bring your most interesting light meter(s) to show and discuss.

PSPCS ELECTION HELD:

Dispite a bit of an afternoon wind storm that knocked out power in spots around Puget Sound, including our meeting hall until shortly after 6 p.m, 20 hardy members were present to vote on our Club officers for our 29th great year.

Nominated at our September meeting has been:

Darrel WomackOffice of President & Door Prize provider

Bill Kimber.....Office of Vice President & News Letter Editor

Don Friend.....Office of Secretary & meeting nummie provider

Shirley Sparrow.....Office of Treasurer & mailing label maker

A call to the floor for any further nominations resulted in complete silence in the hall. It was then moved and seconded to elect the above candidates by acclimation. Motion passed,

A TUCSON CAMERA SHOW REPORT:

The Western Photographic Historical Society held their 45th Semi-Annual Camera & Photographica Show on October 28th. PSPCS member Gary Sivertsen, who attended the Show as a seller and a buyer, called in the following observations about the Show.

He reported that there were about 75 tables this time which was a decrease of about 20 tables from their last Show in the spring. Some of the big dealers like Faith etc. did not attend. However, there were a couple of dealers from the East Coast who came to check out the wild and woolly west they had heard so much about.

There were about 200 buyers through the doors with not too many younger college and school photo. club buyers noted. The Club's consignment table of mainly used "user " items was again popular with dealers looking for eBay stock. Gary said he made some sales but that many buyers were now only looking for digital type equipment. He said there were few antique and collectible "treasures" to be found.

Gary thought the very nice 92 degree dry heat clear weather may have contributed to keeping the buying public numbers low. He said that he would suggest to the membership that they consider cutting back to one Show a year to see if that sparked a bit of renewed interest in coming years.

Once again PSPCS member Bob Kelly has published an article on his love...The Argus. The following is From:

The Photogram Vol. 35 No. 3 (November-December 2007)

Michigan Photographic Historical Society

It is used with thanks. Ed.



C4 camera. With over 300,000 sold, the C4 proved to be a popular amateur's camera with an easy feel in the hand, brilliant viewfinder, fast lens, impressive flash and excellent recommendations from the press.

THE ARGUS C4 A CAMERA FOR THE AMATEUR

By Robert E. Kelly

Modern Photography described the Argus C4 as "... definitely not a camera for the professional photographer. But it does offer the amateur a good return on his investment. He gets one of the sturdiest, most rugged, simple to operate 35mm cameras available with an adequately fast lens of a quality suitable for nearly anything he may encounter." With this kind of carefully chosen wording from the press the general public got the message and purchased over 300,000 Argus C4 cameras.

Argus made the conversion from the earlier Model 21 to the new C4 with some difficulty. A year after the C4's 1951 introduction president Robert E. Lewis stated in the company's annual Progress Report, "I have heard a number of people ask, 'Why do we continue the C4 camera when it appears to have so many complications?'" He goes on to say that "... nearly all of the problems we are currently having in the manufacture of this camera are brought about by our long range plan to further reduce the cost." Argus faced substantial problems trying to implement new techniques in the production of castings for the case and the power shaft. Through production simplification, they hoped to lower the C4's retail price while increasing sales volume much like they had done when they lowered the price of the C3 in the spring of 1950. That move resulted in a four-fold increase in the number of units sold. In 1953, when this strategy proved successful for the C4, Argus had to rapidly increase their production capacity to meet burgeoning demand.

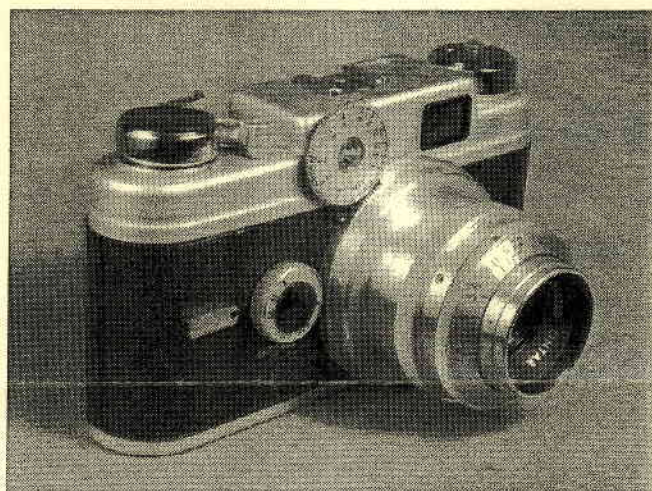
By 1955 Argus was referring to the C4 as their "premier product." Premier or not, the C4 faced stiff competition from the Kodak Signet, the Graphic 35, the Ansco Super Regent and the Realist Model B. To fend off that competition, the Argus sales department provided dealers with information making feature and price comparisons that highlighted the unique and superior aspects of the C4. In the company's 1955 Progress Report, President Lewis said, "Sales of the C4 have been beyond our expectation for the past several months, and further increases in production are limited only by the supply of certain parts." As Lahue and Bailey report, in their book *The American 35mm*, the C4 proved to be very popular with consumers who bought "400% more units per year than the Model 21."

The design of the C4 is a logical extension of the successful post-war Model 21. There is even reference to a "Model 23 in development" in the 1948 annual Argus Progress Report. Perhaps that was the original model number for what became the

C4. *Modern Photography* magazine reported that, "The C4 is in every way a completely new camera. Examination indicates that the designers aimed at a camera that would include all the important features of a more expensive instrument plus good sturdiness. Apparently a good deal of thought went into making the camera parts do their job in the simplest possible way."



Model 21 camera. The Argus Model 21 was based on the Argus A3 body and incorporated optics technology developed during WWII. Continuing refinement evolved to be the Argus C4.



C4R camera. The C4R incorporated "rapid" film advance and rewind, as well as an integrated light meter that mounted on the shoe seen on the right front of the camera.

Referring to the viewfinder image as being "extremely brilliant," the magazine went on to say, "The viewing system is one of the best we have seen on any camera regardless of price." The addition of an integrated rangefinder and viewfinder also proved popular with the public. Dr. Kenneth Tydings agreed and said in his *Argus Guide Book* that the integrated and bright viewfinder/rangefinder was "a time saver that makes

picture taking more efficient and quicker." The three-element lens formula for the C4 was also improved to achieve an f2.8 (60% faster than the Model 21).

Issued in 1958, the C4R version incorporated improvements designed to add "rapid" features for the user. In a change from the film winding knobs on the C4, the new C4R used two easy strokes of a thumb lever film advance that also cocked the shutter. Film rewind was also "rapid," using a pop-up-and-fold-down handle for rewinding the film. An integrated light meter option was incorporated with the CM2 Coupled Exposure Meter that attached to the right front body of the camera. It became obvious later that the short-lived C4R was essentially pre-implementing and testing many features that would be used in the new C44R the following year.



C4 Geiss lens. In 1954, Geiss-America offered wide-angle and telephoto lenses for the C4. The lever seen on the left front of the camera, next to the lens, identifies it as a Geiss modified C4.

Argus made no interchangeable lenses for the C4. However, in 1954 Geiss-America, the same marketing company that imported the Sandmar C3 lenses, announced that Lithagon telephoto and wide-angle lenses were now available for the C4. The camera modification needed, for the new non-Argus lenses, included continued use of the Argus standard 50mm lens. Eventually, Geiss offered a 35mm, 45mm, 100mm, 135mm lens and its own viewfinder. We know now that the reason Argus never adopted the Lithagon lenses, like they did the earlier Sandmar lenses, was that their own interchangeable lenses were being designed and would arrive with the C44 camera.

Collectors have identified several cosmetic variations during C4 production. The early C4 retained the coarse fluted knurling of the previous Model 21, while later models used a finer "coin" like knurling. Eyepiece shape for the viewfinder, initially round, was later converted to rectangular. Early C4's used the circular leatherette pattern from the back of the Model 21 until supplies were exhausted, at which point a smooth lea-

therette design replaced it. Many other variations can be found. With these cosmetic features, Argus was clearly following its standard practice of exhausting an existing stock of parts and materials before replacing them with new ones.



Black C4 camera. The distinctive back body version of the C4 may have been produced to interest the military. Only a handful of these cameras are in collections today. Photo courtesy of the Phil Sterritt collection.

The most distinctive C4 is a black body version produced in very limited quantities. These may have been created to spark the interest of the U.S. military in using the camera. However, no evidence has been found indicating that the C4 was ever adopted for use by any branch of service. The black body versions used the same leatherette as the standard camera and colored the top housing and back a deep violet/black color. The lens barrel, film counter dial, rangefinder, wind and rewind knobs and shutter speed dials all resemble the standard C4 parts with white-on-black graphics. Fewer than six black body C4 are known to be in collections.

The popularity of the C4 kept it in production through 1957 even after Argus announced in the spring of 1956 that the new "C44 was now ready to replace the C4." In July of 1958, when the C4R was announced as the last gasp of the C4 line, it offered desirable new features for the consumer. Argus continued to keep their long successful marketing strategy in mind as they ~~transitioned their production by providing the C4, C4R, C44~~ and C44R with increasing features and at prices for every buyer. Consumers responded by purchasing this family of cameras in ever-increasing numbers. The Argus C4 was definitely not a camera for the professional. It was a stylish, sturdy, simple and very successful camera for the amateur.

Selected References:

1. During research for the C4 the following Argus Annual Reports provided data: 1948, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954 and 1955.
2. Argus internal publications provided a great deal of information. Both editions of the owners manual (the first is blue and yellow and the second is silver and gray) were used for descriptions. Information on the cameras competition came from the Argus Dealers Newsletter of May 1953 and Argus Eyes in June 1955.
3. *US Camera* magazine covered the introduction of the C4 in its June 1951 issue, and *Modern Photography* magazine provided a review of the camera in October 1954.
4. Kalton C. Lahue and Joseph A. Bailey produced two books with Argus chapters: *Collecting Vintage Cameras, Volume 1, The American 35mm* was published in 1972, and a year later *Glass, Brass & Chrome: The American 35mm Miniature Camera* appeared.
5. Three valuable consumer guidebooks provided information: Jacob Deschin's *Picture Making with the Argus* (1954), Kenneth Tydings's *The Argus 35mm Guide* (1953), and Burt Murphy's *Argus 35mm Photography* (1959).
6. The Argus Collectors Group has conducted an online Argus C4 survey where members and the general public have input key features for over 400 cameras. This data is valuable for the identification of variations.

Bob Kelly started collecting Argus cameras over 25 years ago. When the Internet came along he became a founding member of the Argus Collectors Group and has moderated the email list as well as assisted with the development of the groups initial website and surveys. He is one of a group now writing a book about the history of the Argus Company with a focus on its people and operations as well as the extensive production of cameras, projectors and accessories. For the past 16 years Bob has displayed all facets of Argus at the annual Puget Sound Photographic Collectors Society show. More recently he has assisted with the development of displays at the Argus Museum in Ann Arbor. He is a frequent presenter at the annual Argus Collectors Group meeting in Martinsville, Virginia each May. Bob retired from Boeing two years ago and he also enjoys volunteering at museums and researching railroad history. He lives in Renton, WA.

Unique American TLR

by Ron Kuykendall

Imagine if you can, a 1958 American made true twin lens reflex with these features: view lens faster than the taking lens for a brighter image, view lens about one inch above the taking lens to minimize parallax, ground glass focusing with a protective hood, view and taking lens on one lens plate, lenses focused by lever/helical mount (unit focusing), compact cast metal body with leatherette covering, using new 620 film, with dedicated flash and neck strap. –not Argus, –not Kodak –not Citro, –not Graflex.

To review:

Single speed cock and release shutter

Protective view finder hood

American designed and manufactured

Reflex view finder only

Taking lens below larger view lens

Achromat lens by Graf- unit focus

Cast metal body-leatherette covered

Only used 620 film- only manufacturers product to do so

Rotating disk with fixed aperture stops

Designated flash and neck strap

The gold standard for TLRs at the time included such features as unit focusing, full frame ground glass viewing, flash sync, cast metal body, dedicated flash, –all of which this camera featured. The devil is in the details though –shutter was single speed cock and release of manufacturer's own design. Lenses were Graf achromatic. Graf was noted for its large format studio lenses; this was a cemented pair in front of the shutter with slightly better resolution than a box camera meniscus lens. But of course the camera was thus equipped to use color film. Note that Graf also made many of the notorious lenses on the half frame 127 minicams of the previous period.

Design of the TLR was great, overall quality and some of the specs not so great, which probably explains why its market value is low. Apparently sales were not in large numbers; they are hard to find. This little noticed camera may have been their only 620 camera and one of the last designs of the Utility/Spartus/Falcon/Herold/Spencer/Galter manufacturing giant of Chicago. Their last design, the Vanguard 127, is well remembered. The company had survived on cheap copies of popular cameras: the Argus A, the Argus 75, the Voigtlander Brilliant, along with a mix of their own designs, the Vue series of fake TLR box cameras, and numerous minicams of various nameplates.

Their antiquated manufacturing and design technology was lost in the competition of the early 60's.

References: *McKeown*, *Lind's List*

Internet sites and eBay listings

Aerial Photography

A photographer for CNN was assigned to cover southern California's Wildfires. He wanted pictures of the heroic work the firefighters were doing as they battled the blazes.

When the photographer arrived on the scene, he realized that the smoke was so thick it would seriously impede, or even make impossible, his getting good photographs from the ground level. He requested permission from his boss to rent a plane and take photos from the air.

His request was approved and he used his cell phone to call the local County airport to charter a flight. He was told a single engine plane would be waiting for him at the airport.

Arriving at the airfield, he spotted a plane warming up outside a hanger. He jumped in with his bag, slammed the door shut, and shouted, "Let's go." The pilot taxied out, swung the plane into the wind and roared down the runway. Once in the air, the photographer instructed the pilot, "Fly over the valley and make two or three low passes so I can take some pictures of the fires on the hillsides."

"Why?" asked the pilot.

"Because I'm a photographer for CNN," he responded "And I need to get some close-up shots."

The pilot was strangely silent for a moment, finally he stammered, "So, what you're telling me is you're NOT! my flight instructor?"

So

What two-toned camera

built from 1958-1966 was designed for use with a clip-on selenium meter?

Answer: The Argus C-3 Matchmatic cameras have two tone colors of black and brown.

According to McKeown's the non-coupled meter needs to be with the camera to consider it a collectible. Prices range from \$15 to \$25.

